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ABSTRACT

Based on the view that the quality of adult-child interaction is crucial to children's development and learning in early childhood settings, this guide complements and expands upon the Scottish Office Curriculum Framework for young children and illustrates key aspects of children's learning and development. The guide is designed to be used for planning, developing staff, supporting training of students, facilitating work with parents, and teaching reflectively. A series of illustrated case studies of children from 3 to 8 years shows how observation of children's play can allow the interests of the children to inform educational planning, thus ensuring that the needs of the whole child are met. The case studies highlight how observing what children say and do, listening to their conversations, and getting information from their work, all help staff to build up a picture and plan to meet children's individual needs. Each case study is formatted according to the observation cycle: (1) observing and recording; (2) creating opportunities for learning; (3) evaluating the learning; and (4) informing future planning. The topics for the case studies include food preferences, problem solving, encouragement of book use, use of a quiet room, pretend play, book sharing, snack time, transitions, emergent writing, outdoor play, and physical play. (KB)

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EARLY EDUCATION SUPPORT

Looking, Listening and Learning

Quality Interaction with Children

PS 029239

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Looking, Listening and Learning

Quality Interaction with Children

Juliet Hancock and Barbara Dale

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Introduction

This document complements and expands upon the Scottish Office Curriculum Framework for children in their pre-school years and illustrates key aspects of children's development and learning.

The series of case studies has been devised to be used by all practitioners who work with young children. It is specifically concerned with children between three and eight years of age. The activities range from those which involve a whole class or group to individual children working with an adult. While the case studies are drawn from real situations and cover all aspects of learning, they are not intended to be prescriptive. It is hoped that they will be seen as a resource to encourage practitioners to look at their work with young children, to listen to and gain an insight into children's learning needs.

> *Staff usually get to know children very well ... they observe children regularly and keep detailed information about the children in their heads. Some of this evidence should be used to build a record of children's achievements and progress and to plan the next steps in learning.*
>
> *Promoting Learning: Assessing Children's Progress 3–5* (Early Education Support Series), Scottish CCC, 1999

When working with children, practitioners will have ideas and impressions of how individuals and groups have responded. Practitioners who work as part of a team can share these observations and learn from them, but others may work alone, miss something or have been distracted from their observation. It is important, therefore, to build up written information as well as being watchful and observant. Selective recording of observations can then be used for future planning of learning opportunities. They will, in turn, also facilitate the dialogue between staff and parents crucial to children's progress. 'Living' records, to which practitioners, children and parents contribute by adding their own observations – both to formally recorded and to informal records of progress, such as photographs and samples of children's work, help not only to share what children have learned, but also chart their interest, involvement and progress.

Observant adults can gain the necessary information to meet the developmental needs of children. Observation of children's play can allow the interests of the children to inform planning, thus ensuring that the needs of the whole child are met. The quality of adult interaction is crucial if children are to develop, progress and consolidate both their skills and their understanding of the world around them. Assessment of the needs of the child is possible through adult observation of children and through recognising and valuing what children learn from one another and encouraging them to reflect upon their work.

Working in this way will contribute to the adult's knowledge of the three different strands of children's learning.

- Children's interests
- Children's needs
- Children's knowledge and skills.

This knowledge will facilitate planning. It will help adults to be alert to the needs of children and to plan directly from what they have observed. Observing what children say and do, listening to their conversations, getting information from the work that children produce, all help us to build up a picture of the child and plan to meet their individual needs.

Aims

This series of case studies aims to:

- help practitioners to evaluate their practice and achieve clear goals for children's learning
- help practitioners develop their skills of observation and understand the role it plays in extending children's learning
- make practitioners aware of the variety of ways of recording observations
- encourage practitioners to examine their role in supporting children's learning
- enable practitioners to feel confident about using the child as the starting point for their own planning
- emphasise the need to focus on children's learning without restricting it to a single key aspect of the curriculum.

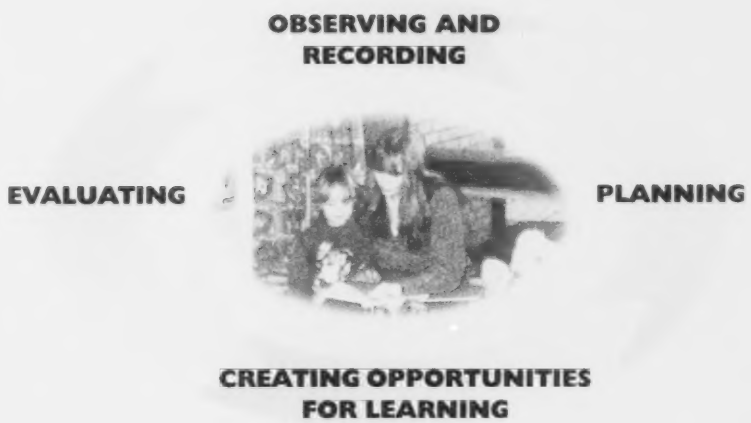
Possible uses for the document

- planning within your setting
- staff development and training
- supporting the training of students and new practitioners
- facilitating work with parents
- drawing on past experience of children, reflecting and carrying ideas forward into current practice.

Format

For ease of reference, each case study has been written to a similar format.

The main sections follow the observation cycle depicted below:



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Denny Day Nursery

Denny Nursery School

Dunblane Kids' Club

Sue Faulkner, Childminder

Langlees Nursery Class

Laurieston Primary School, primary one and two

Meadows Private Day Nursery

Play Pals, Falkirk College Nursery

Also, many thanks to Falkirk Council for facilitating our visits to their nurseries and schools and to Julie Coyne and Nicola Eadsforth for allowing us to add to our range of photographs.

Finally, a big thank you to all those who provided their support, patience and critical reviews.

'I HATE CAULIFLOWER!'

The student in a nursery class was observing the activities available as part of her course work. She noticed that although snacks were on offer throughout each session the children spent very little time at the table. She was aware of the many opportunities to gain skills promoted by spending time being sociable at the snack area.

The student approached the teacher and asked if she could, in consultation with the staff and children, develop the area. An agreement was reached and the student spent time on further observations and talking and listening to the children.

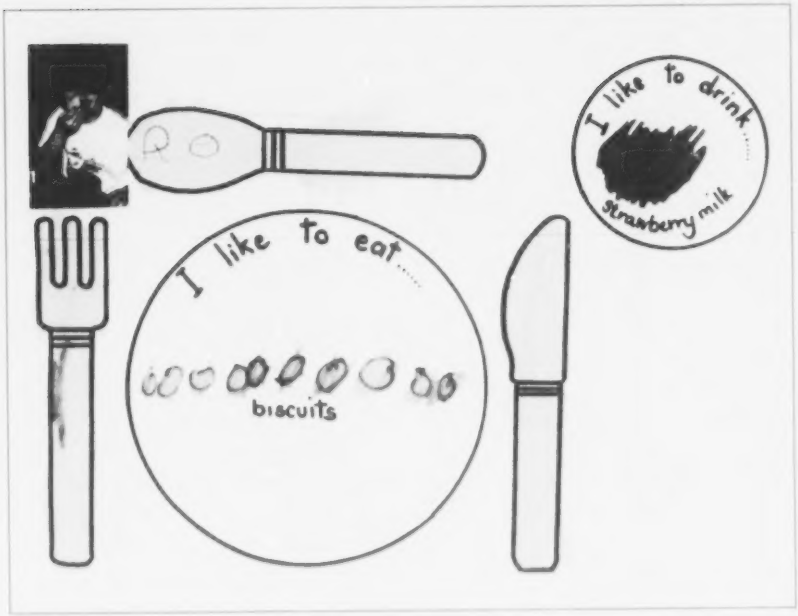
Opportunities for learning

The first step in the development was to move the table to give the children better access and to allow them to prepare the food themselves.

The area was made more attractive using the children's artwork on the theme of 'My favourite food' ('I hate cauliflower!') A menu board was added and the children helped to plan the menu for the week, which involved a great deal of discussion on the kinds of foods they should try to eat and those to resist. The menu board was then prepared for the day and a chart devised for the children to record when they had eaten their snack.

The student also involved the children in the production of personalised placemats. These placemats had the child's name and photograph and drawings of the child's favourite food, cutlery and plates on the front (taking into account the two left-handed children). The child's name, age, etc. were on the back.

The children were encouraged to take turns to prepare the snack, find their placemat, serve themselves from a side table and sit down to eat. They then had to wash and dry their dishes and record that they had eaten a snack.



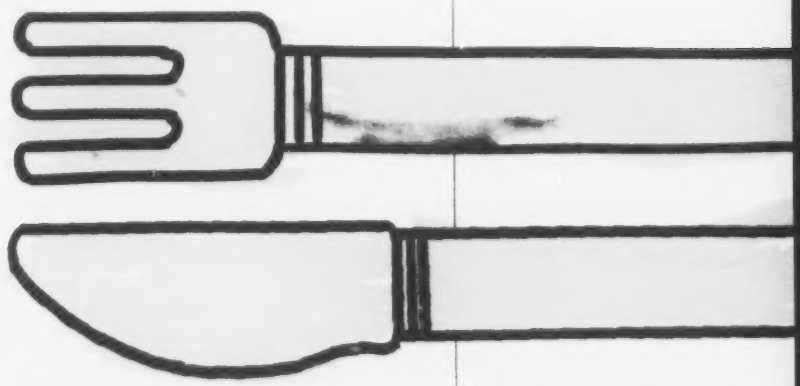
Evaluating the learning

All the children benefited by:

- taking part in an enjoyable, informal snack time
- developing independence and confidence
- making choices
- learning new skills of planning and recording
- forming positive relationships with other children
- recognising their own placemat and beginning to recognise their name.

Informing future planning

- The nursery student thought she had covered the five key aspects of the curriculum. Do you agree? Can you suggest how she has achieved this?
- Are there any aspects you would develop further? If so how?



SOLVING A PROBLEM

Andrew was observed at the craft table making drawing after drawing. He approached the nursery nurse with a pile of at least ten drawings.

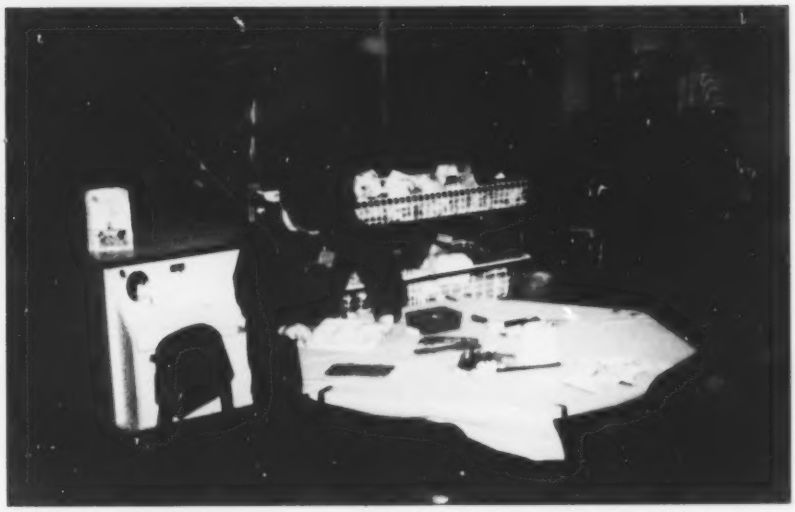
'Now I need to put my name on', he said.

Opportunities for learning

'You're going to need a lot of names for all of your drawings, Andrew. Shall we count how many you have done?' Together they counted the drawings.

'Now I'm going to put them altogether', said Andrew. The nursery nurse provided Andrew with a variety of materials which he could use for attaching his drawings, including adhesive tape, glue, stapler, split-pins, etc. Andrew tried out various materials before selecting the adhesive tape. He methodically piled up his drawings and the nursery nurse helped him to hold them together while he used the adhesive tape.

'Now I'm going to put my one name on!' said Andrew, selecting one name label from the name book and carefully sticking it onto the front drawing.



Evaluating the learning

Andrew was able to:

- develop independence by making his own decisions
- face a challenge and persevere in order to reach his desired end result
- solve problems and experiment with ideas
- understand the properties of the materials he was using
- apply mathematical processes such as sorting, counting, ordering and measuring
- develop increasing control of fine movements of his fingers and hands
- interact successfully with an adult in order to ask for help and solve a problem.

Informing future planning

- How should the problem-solving process Andrew went through be recorded?
- How would you build upon Andrew's problem-solving abilities?
- What sort of questions would the nursery nurse have used in order to extend Andrew's thoughts?

'IF YOU CATCH ONE YOU GET A WISH'

The playleader of an urban playgroup had placed a basket of leaves on the autumn display table and observed two girls throwing the leaves up and trying to catch them coming down.

Kirsty: 'If you catch one you get a wish.'

Gillian: 'That's only if it's from a tree.'

Kirsty: 'No it's not. It's not. It's any leafs (sic) and I'm going to catch them all.'

The girls continued to throw the leaves around.

The playleader resisted the temptation to object to the mess when she realised that they were having a great deal of fun.

Opportunities for learning

A few days after this incident the playleader brought in an extremely large bag of leaves and some canvas sheeting. The central area of the hall was cleared and the canvas spread out. She then dumped the leaves in the middle and invited the interested onlookers to play in the leaves. Some of the children were hesitant at first but most soon joined in. The playleader supervised closely as some of the children, naturally, became very boisterous. She coped with this by giving these children a 'rest' and allowing the quieter children to take that opportunity to join in. The activity was irresistible to the extent that the adults also joined in and great fun was had by all.

Evaluating the learning

Kirsty and Gillian benefited by:

- being allowed to explore without too many restrictions
- experimenting by throwing the leaves and watching them fall
- expressing their feelings and communicating their ideas.

All the children benefited by:

- enjoying an energetic activity indoors
- a sense of well-being from physical activity
- expressing ideas and feelings through movement
- playing cooperatively
- seeing adults value their play by joining in.

Informing future planning

- How did the approach taken help children in this particular setting?
- How might you record what took place and plan to meet children's physical development needs?
- How would you share the value of the experience with parents/carers?

Kirsty:
'If you catch one you get a wish.'

Gillian:
'That's only if it's from a tree.'

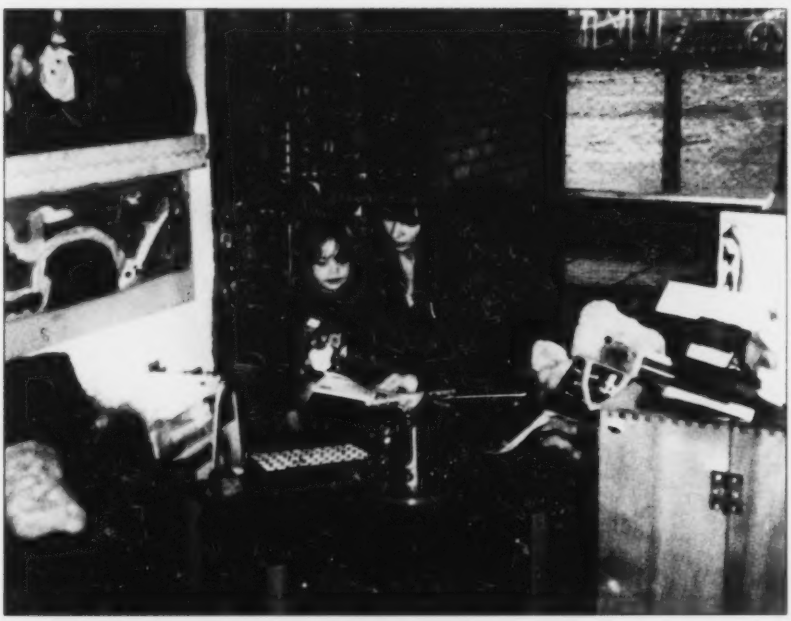
Kirsty:
'No it's not. It's not. It's any leafs (sic) and I'm going to catch them all.'

'SHARE A BOOK'

The nursery staff had observed over a number of weeks that the book area was being under-used. Although they had made attempts to encourage children to use the area, they found that children were tending to engage in other activities.

Creating opportunities for learning

Staff decided to rearrange the book area in a corner just inside the nursery. They made sure that it was comfortable and inviting and included a wide range of books. They involved parents by explaining to them what they were trying to achieve and inviting them to stay on at the beginning and end of sessions in order to read with their child. They organised a 'Share a book' week where every child took a book home with them. They then set up a



system where parents could exchange books every week and record the child's comments and their own about the books they had shared together.

The nursery children began visiting the local library every fortnight where they would be read a story and be allowed to check out a book.

Evaluating the learning

The children had opportunities to:

- listen and respond to stories
- use books to find interesting information
- enjoy choosing their own books to share in an inviting and relaxing environment
- take responsibility for caring for books and understand their purpose

- make choices about books and share their views with others
- see that books and reading were valued by the adults around them
- develop positive attitudes towards books and reading.

Informing future planning

- How would you maintain the interest of the children in books?
- What other activities might involve parents/carers in encouraging children to enjoy books?
- What further improvements could be made to ensure that books and stories are attractive to the children?
- How would you record the progress of individual children in this area?

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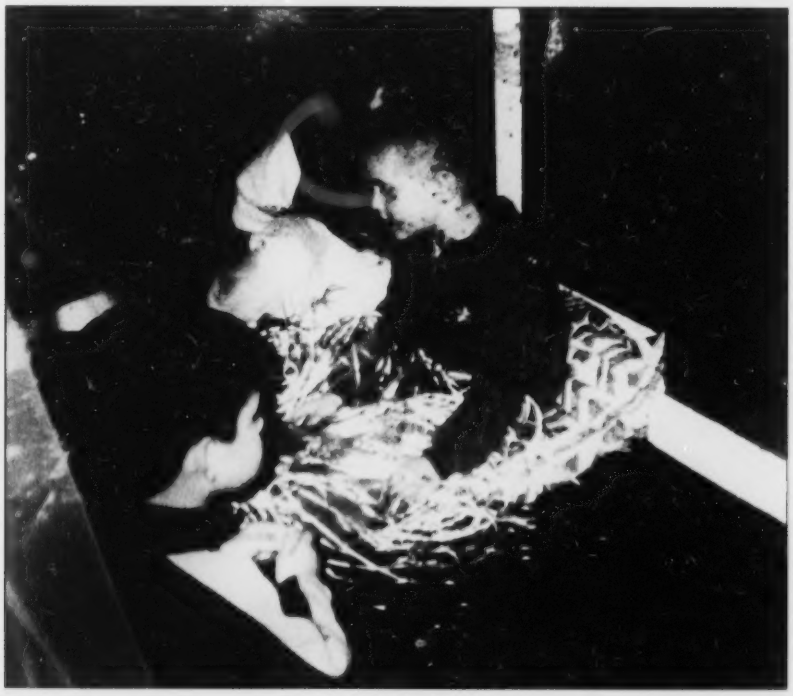


RELAXING

The day nursery has a number of children with special needs including sensory impairment. The staff team was concerned that they were not providing enough stimulation for all the children, but most especially for the children with special needs. They agreed that they were not making the best use of the small quiet room and decided to develop it.

One worker had contacts with a voluntary organisation that provides play opportunities for children with special needs and arranged to borrow their sensory equipment. This equipment included bubble tubes, fibre optic lights and a projector.

Opportunities for learning

The team draped the room with fabric, creating dens and cosy corners. The windows were covered and rugs and beanbags added. The sensory equipment was placed in the room and soothing music played.

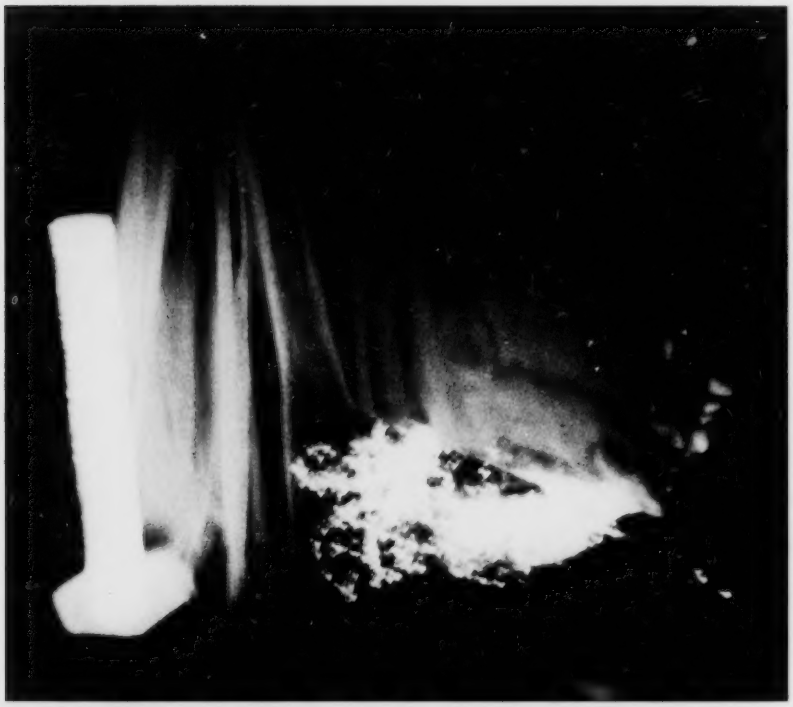
The room was a great success and was developed in a number of ways as the children explored their environment. One group of children wanted to use torches and these were provided along with shiny objects and glow-in-the-dark shapes.

All of the children found the room relaxing, as did the staff!

Evaluating the learning

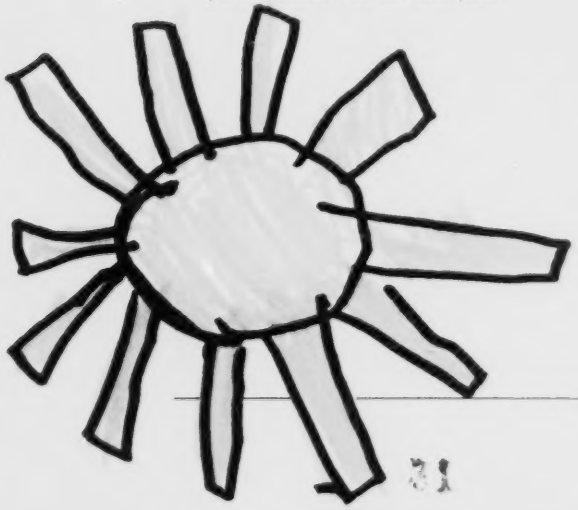
All the children benefited by:

- participating in a relaxing and therapeutic activity
- developing powers of observation using their senses
- using language to describe, ask questions and develop ideas
- showing consideration for the needs of others
- developing positive attitudes towards one another through sharing the environment.



Informing future planning

- What opportunities does this offer for promoting positive behaviour?
- How might you record children's responses during this activity?
- How would you plan for this type of experience to be a regular part of your framework for the year?



MYSELF

The nursery had just admitted a four year old child, newly arrived from Korea. English was a new language to her, and she needed reassurance and support to help her settle into her new environment.

Her mother was encouraged to come in with her to help her settle and to reassure her through the use of her home language. The teacher observed the child's unwillingness to leave her mother's side on the first day, except to take a closer look at the classroom 'Welcome' poster displayed on the wall.

The following day the teacher again observed the child studying the 'Welcome' poster and, after a while, giving a kiss to the picture of the child on the poster from a similar cultural background.

Creating opportunities for learning

The teacher began a topic on 'Myself'. She encouraged the children to bring photographs of themselves from home which the class made into their own 'Welcome' poster.

She used the photographs in order to promote discussion with the children about similarities and differences. This provided a good opportunity to engage the children in discussion about who has the same colour eyes, different hair colour, height, skin tone and so on.

The following week the teacher provided mirrors, crayons and paints representing different skin tones and the children were able to make their own self-portraits.

Evaluating the learning

The child benefited from:

- an environment which recognised the importance of parental inclusion
- having her home language valued and supported
- receiving linguistic support from her mother
- being involved in activities which encouraged the children to value similarities and differences
- having her interest picked up on by the teacher and pursued in a supportive and reassuring manner.

All the children benefited from:

- being involved in activities which encouraged the development of positive attitudes towards others
- developing their powers of observation through the self-portrait activity
- being able to feel good about themselves
- being involved in conversations about themselves and others
- using language for a variety of purposes, for example, to describe, ask questions, develop ideas
- using their own drawings to express their ideas and feelings about themselves.

Informing future planning

- Which aspects of learning could be further developed here?
- Why was it important for all the children to be involved in activities about themselves?
- In what other ways could the new child be helped to settle in?

THE BOX

The nursery class was offered a very large box. The box was large enough to house six children comfortably and it was decided to leave it in its 'raw' state to observe what use the children would put it to.

The box became a caravan, a cave, a train carriage and eventually a cage full of tigers. The teacher observing the play noticed that it was the same small group of children who were engaging in this play. Other children spent a long time looking on, watching the others, and some seemed wary of the dark interior and were hesitant to join in.

Creating opportunities for learning

The following day the teacher placed some torches at the entrance to the box, leaving one inside the box, illuminating the darkness. The more hesitant children were invited to have a look. They became involved, taking the torches in with them and playing in the semi-darkness. Later in the session the box became a cave again, with the children enjoying the darkness.

At the end of the session the teacher read to the children by torchlight, choosing stories about night-time and dark. She engaged the children in conversation about how they had felt in the dark, whether they were scared and what things the dark had made them think about.

Evaluating the learning

The children were:

- encouraged to explore their own feelings in a safe and reassuring environment
- encouraged to express their feelings and responses
- able to develop their self-confidence by having control over the dark
- encouraged to explore the contrasts between darkness and light
- able to engage in planning and problem solving through talking, listening and sharing ideas
- able to become aware of and respect the feelings of others with respect to fears, likes and dislikes
- encouraged to play cooperatively, sharing resources and taking turns.

Informing future planning

- How was this very flexible situation used to enhance the children's learning?
- How might you record the children's responses?
- How would you ensure that you continued to meet the needs of all the children whilst allowing the play to develop further?
- How could this lead to other aspects of development and learning for the children?

Child 1
(looks tentatively into the box) "What's in there?"
(whispers to himself) "I can see the dark"

Adult
"It is very dark but there isn't anything in there.
Shall we have a look?"

Child 1
"No...too dark"

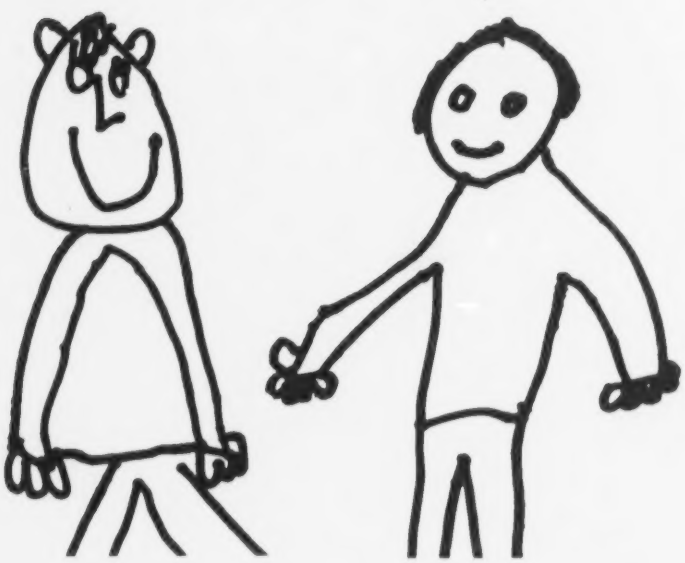
Child 2
(joins in with torch)

Adult
"Shine the torch in, lets see"

Adult provides another torch and Child 1
and Child 2 play with torches

Adult
"It's not so dark now is it?"

Child 1
"I'm going to tiptoe in now"



'I KNOW THIS ONE'

Two boys, aged three and four, were sharing an illustrated nursery rhyme book in the book area at their playgroup. The older child was turning the pages, stopping at a rhyme he recognised from the illustration.

'I know this one. I'll read this one', he said.

The younger child leaned against him to see the picture and to listen. The children then continued to look through the book together, finding 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' and singing it together.

The playleader observed the children pick up another book and look at the cover carefully, before the older child began to 'tell' the story to the younger one.

Creating opportunities for learning

The playleader re-organised the book area slightly at the end of the session, displaying some more nursery rhyme and song books. She added several extra cushions and a tape recorder with taped rhymes and an accompanying book.

The children continued to use the area for sharing books, listening to taped rhymes and recording themselves singing and telling stories. The playleaders introduced a 'share a book' day each fortnight where the children chose a book in pairs from the local library to share with each other at playgroup.

Evaluating the learning

The children were able to:

- share books with each other and with adults in comfortable and inviting surroundings
- develop an enthusiasm for stories and books
- develop a curiosity about words and begin to recognise that print carries meaning
- re-tell familiar rhymes and stories
- take cues from illustrations
- listen to and enjoy music and songs
- listen with respect to one another
- make independent choices about books they would like to read
- express themselves through stories and song
- use language for a variety of purposes.

Informing future planning

- How would you further encourage the peer learning which was taking place ?
- What other methods would you use to help the children to enjoy rhyme and song ?
- What kind of record would capture the information you need to plan ahead for the children's development in language and communication ?

'EMPTY, FULL, TOO FULL'

Tracy, three-and-a-half years old, was observed by her key worker at snack time, attempting to pour her milk into her own cup. The milk jug was large and quite full.

The resulting spillage upset Tracy, who had to have her clothes changed. Her key worker reassured her that it was all right and that the jug had been too heavy for her and too full. The key worker then recorded her observation in her note book to ensure that the provision the next day met the needs of the children.

Creating opportunities for learning

The next day at snack time the key worker provided four smaller jugs containing milk, which the children could easily lift. Tracy eagerly filled her own cup but, fascinated by the milk pouring out, carried on pouring until the milk flowed over the side. The key worker provided a cloth to mop up the spillage, while explaining to Tracy that her cup had become too full.

This led to a discussion among the children:

'Mine is all empty.'
'Look, mine is still full.'
'Tracy's one was too full.'

Another child said that hers was 'full to the very, very top'. The key worker encouraged this discussion by asking questions, introducing some new vocabulary and engaging the children in making predictions.

The key worker then further encouraged the children's interest by setting out the water play with jugs of different sizes for pouring, cups, beakers, a small watering can and a teapot.

Evaluating the learning

The children were able to:

- experiment and explore
- test out theories
- gain confidence in their abilities
- fill, pour, empty and re-fill in a non-threatening and enjoyable way
- add to their vocabulary
- explore concepts of capacity and volume
- be supported in their investigations by questioning from a sensitive adult
- take pride in their newly developed skills of coordination and independence at snack times.

Informing future planning

- The children's knowledge and understanding of the world was promoted by their key worker. Which other key aspects of their learning were being provided for ?
- How could the key worker continue to enable the children to pursue their interest in capacity and volume ?
- How could the informal observations in the key worker's notebook be captured more formally to share with others ?

MOVING HOUSE

Four-year-old Calum was shortly to move house. This would involve not only a change in area but also attending a new nursery. He was to remain with the same childminder who cared for him on a daily basis.

The childminder observed the effects the impending changes in Calum's life were having upon him. He clung to adults more, was unsettled in his play and his behaviour was unusually aggressive.

Creating opportunities for learning

The childminder read Calum a story about moving house. She encouraged him to ask questions and drew his attention to some of the things which happen when you move house. She used the opportunity to reassure Calum and point out some of the nice things about his new house. She reminded him that some things would not change, for example coming to her house to be cared for.

The next day Calum became very involved with construction materials. He built a variety of structures which he wanted to save. The childminder made a space available for him to keep his constructions and assured him that they would be there the following afternoon.

The following afternoon, Calum arrived with a schedule of his new house, including a photograph. He wanted to talk about it, so together they

discussed the new house. Further discussion about moving house continued over the next few weeks with Calum still seeking the reassurance of his own unchanged constructions. The childminder decided to photograph these for Calum, who happily made his own book from them, ready to take to the new house with him.

Evaluating the learning

Calum benefited from:

- receiving individual adult attention
- being given support when he was anxious and upset about change
- being encouraged to talk about himself and his feelings
- having his confidence and self-esteem boosted
- being allowed to create his own security through his constructions
- having his wishes respected and valued
- engaging in activities which encouraged him to feel involved with the changes to his life.

Informing future planning

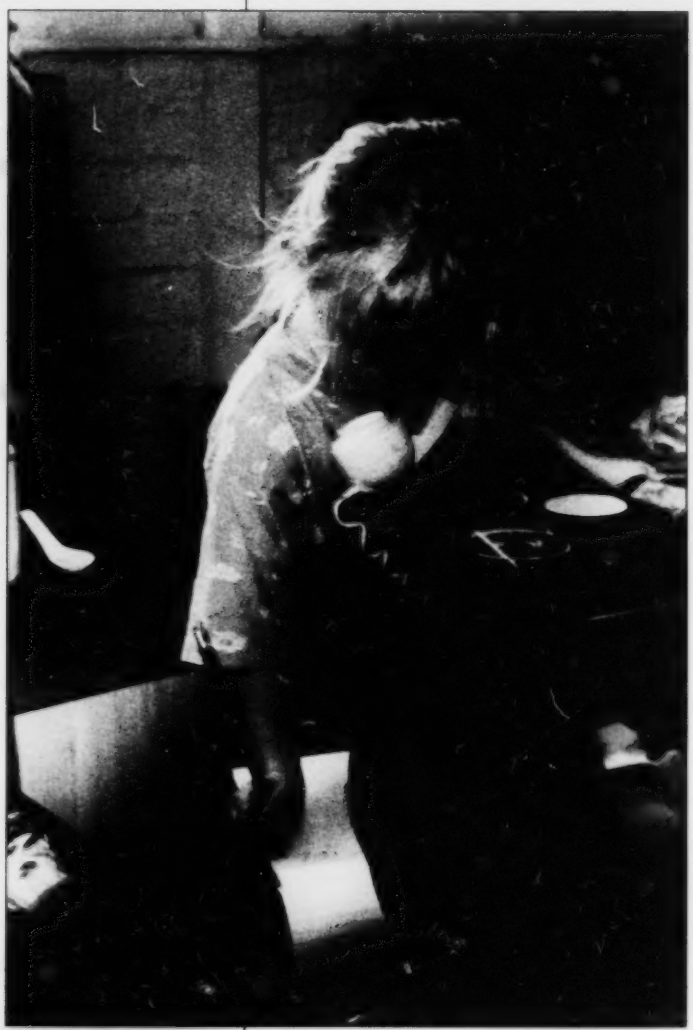
- Supporting Calum's emotional well-being was important. How would you continue to monitor his feelings?
- What other strategies could be used to help Calum to express his feelings?
- How would you plan for supporting Calum once the move had taken place?

EMERGENT WRITING

The emergent writing area at a large day nursery was set up to help children experience and understand the purpose of writing.

Staff observed that the children used the area more for role-play, rather than using the opportunity to experiment with writing.

Creating opportunities for learning



Staff reviewed the resources they had provided and introduced some new ones. They included a telephone and directory, clipboards, a typewriter, in-tray and personal organiser, stapler, etc.

They also provided a display board at the children's height for all the work produced and they put up a chart of the lower case letters of the alphabet. They altered the layout of the room so that this area backed on to the computer corner.

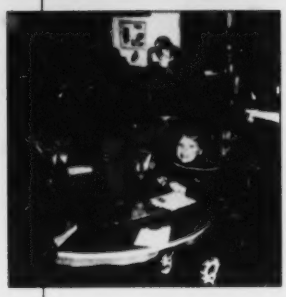
Evaluating the learning

All the children benefited from:

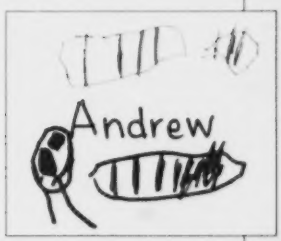
- experimenting with symbols, letters and words in writing
- developing an increased awareness of writing in the context of a play experience
- using technology to further their learning
- handling tools with increasing control
- having opportunities to work independently and as part of a group
- being supported and able to ask for help when they needed it
- being able to select resources and make decisions about their use
- using existing skills and developing new ones
- seeing their efforts valued by the adults in the setting
- being able to display their work and have a sense of pride and achievement.

Informing future planning

- How did the resources provided encourage the development of specific skills?



- What steps would you next take to promote the children's interest in writing?
- How would you allow this activity to lead to other aspects of development and learning, for example, computer skills?



'THAT'S YOUR PICTURE, ISN'T IT?'

Andrew attends a large private day nursery. He is four years old and is in the pre-school room. He is a fairly quiet boy but has become comfortable with the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) assessor who visits the nursery on a weekly basis.

Andrew greets her in the same way each time she arrives. He removes her identification badge and points to her photograph.

'That's your picture, isn't it?'
'Yes, it is. Does it look like me?'
'Yes – what's it for?'

'So that I can visit lots of nurseries and they know who I am.'

Over a number of weeks, Andrew has acquired the manipulative skills to replace the badge in it's holder and has also pointed out his own photograph on the birthday chart many times.

Andrew's interest and increasing manipulative abilities were noted by his key worker on his personal profile.

Creating opportunities for learning

Following one of the assessor's visits, Andrew's key worker suggests that he might like to make a badge for himself and provides the materials. She

includes a photograph from the same set used for the birthday chart. This attracts the interest of some of the other children, who are encouraged to join in the activity.

At her next visit, the assessor is greeted by a group of children proudly displaying their own identification badges, complete with photographs and names, which she spends time admiring.

Evaluating the learning

Andrew benefited by:

- receiving individual adult attention
- leading the activity and directing the other children
- being able to follow through his initial interest.

All the children were able to:

- increase their manipulative skills
- become more aware of print by comparing names
- build their self-esteem and personal identity
- increase their vocabulary and communication skills
- engage in discussion with each other and adults about something which interested them.

Informing future planning

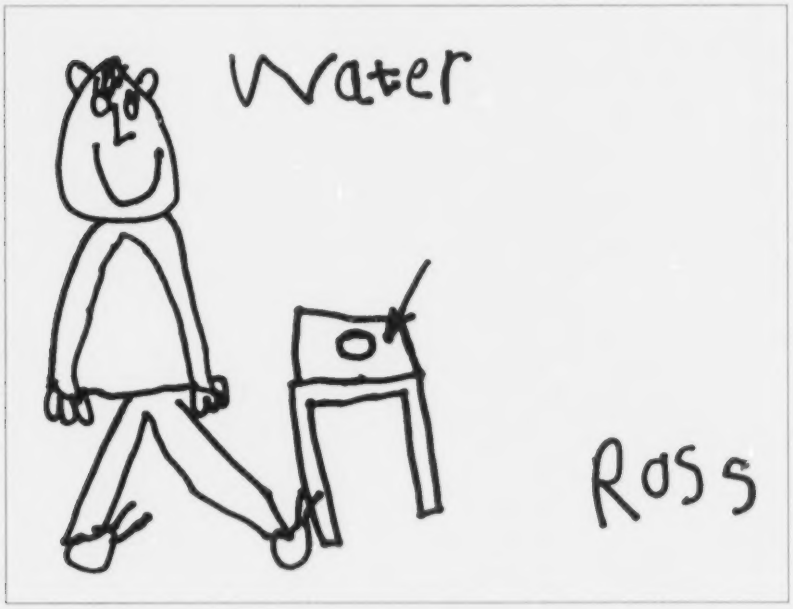
- Would you follow up the badge-making activity with any further activities ?
- How would you continue to ensure that children were able to initiate ideas?
- The children have already begun to recognise their own names from their badges. What might be done to further stimulate their interest in this particular area?

'HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?'

A small group of children in a primary two class arrived one very cold winter's morning with a large icicle they had discovered on their way to school. They were fascinated by it and wanted to know how long it would 'last'.

Creating opportunities for learning

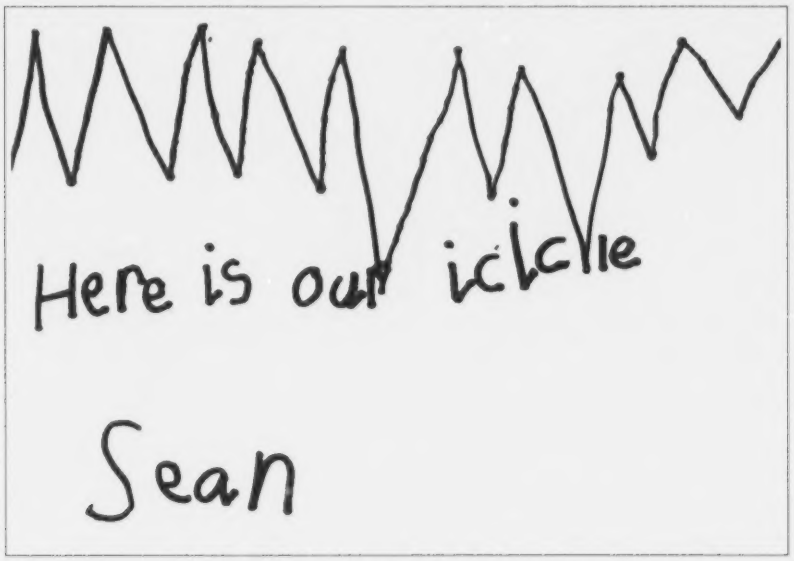
The teacher put the icicle in an empty water tray and the children noted the time. The children were then asked to estimate how long each of them thought the icicle would take to melt. Estimations varied wildly and one child wanted to know how they would remember 'what size it started as'. The problem was solved when another child suggested that they measure the icicle. The teacher provided a tape measure which the children then attached to the side of the water tray, marking the length of the icicle.

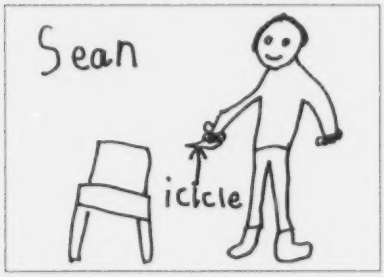


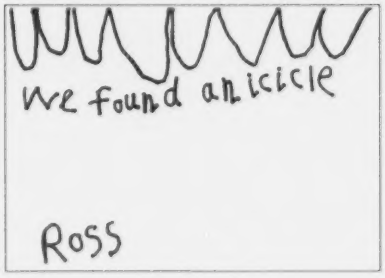
The class kept a check on the icicle and recorded progress using the tape measure throughout the first part of the morning. Much discussion arose from the amount of melted water, the changing shape of the icicle and how long it was taking it to melt.

Finally, when the icicle had melted, the children compared their estimates to see whose was the most accurate. The water was then drained into a measuring jug and the quantity of water noted.

Later, the children recorded the whole process, including their exciting discovery of the icicle. Through drawings, they showed the different stages of melting and recorded the times to show how long the process had taken.







Evaluating the learning

The children were able to:

- share an exciting discovery
- explore their interest further, with adult support and guidance
- observe the process of melting
- estimate and measure length, time and volume
- add to their vocabulary using newly-introduced terms and concepts
- develop their knowledge and understanding of a scientific process
- work as a team
- record results of a meaningful experience.

Informing future planning

- Which key aspects of children's development and learning were being promoted through the activities which took place ?
- What began as an exciting discovery on the way to school was allowed to develop in a variety of ways. Can you identify any disadvantages from pursuing this any further?
- How would you continue to encourage children to take the initiative and to work as a team?

OUTSIDE IN THE SNOW

The children in a primary one class had just come inside from the playground where it had begun to snow. Their excited conversation encouraged their teacher to take them back outside where they ran and jumped in the falling snow.

Creating opportunities for learning

The teacher allowed the children to explore freely before taking them back to the classroom where they sat and had circle-time. The children talked about the snow, what it looked like and how it felt. They discussed their feelings of running, jumping and dancing through the falling snowflakes. The teacher encouraged the children to talk about how they felt and to recall previous experiences of snow.

Later that morning, the teacher used the children's experience in the snow to cover her already planned writing activity.

Evaluating the learning

The children benefited from:

- being able to pursue an exciting moment
- enjoying an energetic activity
- a sense of well-being from outdoor play
- being encouraged to express their feelings through movement
- having the opportunity to listen to others
- using language to discuss personal experiences
- recording their experience
- seeing that their experience was valued by the adult.

Informing future planning

- How do you think the approach taken helped the children?
- How might you encourage what took place to lead to other aspects of development and learning?

Colette
I am outside in the snow.
Stuart
I'm playing outside in the park.
I'm running round and round. I'm very cold.
outside by the pond.

PARACHUTE GAMES

The weather was getting colder and it was becoming dark as the children finished school. The Out of School Care Club observed some children becoming frustrated and bored from lack of outdoor play opportunities.

Creating opportunities for learning

Staff reviewed the resources they had for indoor physical play and decided to develop the range of activities on offer. This included providing a parachute for use in the school hall.

Children quickly opted to use the parachute and were soon engaged in energetic play where they were able to explore different games in a large space. When this became too boisterous, staff introduced some cooperative games which encouraged the children to join in and work as a group.

At the end of the session, some relaxing music was played and the children explored different ways of moving together with the parachute.

Evaluating the learning

The children benefited from:

- being provided with opportunities for physical activity
- engaging in a large scale activity indoors
- releasing their tension in a positive and enjoyable way
- exploring a range of different ways of using their bodies
- working cooperatively
- using movement as a medium for expression
- listening and responding to music
- further developing positive relationships with others
- feeling involved.

Informing future planning

- Staff decided that this approach had been very successful. What might the next steps be?
- How did this activity allow the children to develop their skills and confidence?
- What other props or stimuli might add to the children's enjoyment of this activity?

GOING TO HOSPITAL

Naomi's mother was going into hospital for an operation. This would mean that Naomi, three years old, would be spending more time with her childminder.

The childminder had discussed the situation with Naomi's mother and they both agreed that Naomi was showing signs of anxiety.

Creating opportunities for learning

The childminder set up a corner of the living room for hospital play and provided appropriate props. She also set out the 'Duplo' hospital figures and equipment in another area of the room.

She spent time observing Naomi's play, assisting when asked to and encouraging her. The hospital play provided a good context for talking about Naomi's mother's visit to hospital and allowed Naomi to enact some of her anxieties.

Later, the childminder was able to share her observations with Naomi's parents and discuss plans for the next few weeks when Naomi's mother would be in hospital.

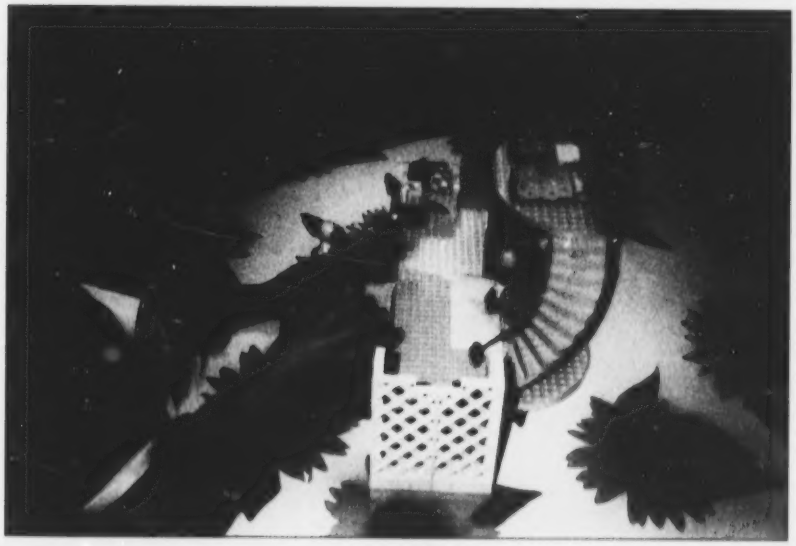
Evaluating the learning

Naomi benefited from:

- supportive adults who worked collaboratively to meet her needs
- an environment which was secure and responsive
- play opportunities which enabled her to act out her fears and anxieties
- opportunities to express her feelings to sensitive adults.

Informing future planning

- How would you deal with this situation?
- The childminder needs to communicate regularly with Naomi's mother about Naomi's well being while she is in hospital. How could she include Naomi in this?
- How might Naomi's needs change once her mother is in hospital and how might they be effectively met?



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